

Testimony for joint committee hearing March 17, 2009

I am here to offer my support for HB 4153.

CIVPRO is a non-profit organization formed for the mutual benefit of all property owners and for the protection of property rights and the Michigan economy. We believe in environmentally responsible economic development.

We are a fairly new organization that has been growing rapidly. Our membership consists of farmers, developers, small business owners, realtors, homebuilders and homeowners. I am here on behalf of thousands of property owners who are concerned about the regulatory environment of this state. I can say with confidence that the property owners we represent believe in good stewardship of our air, land and water. But they also want to be left free to make good decisions for their families, businesses and personal property. They favor the overall improvement of our environment and our economy.

While our national economy suffers, it has been especially difficult in Michigan. One wonders why we lag so far behind the rest of the nation. It is a complex answer and there is no "silver bullet" that will serve as a panacea for our economic ills. But without question, most property owners in Michigan who own or operate a business will tell you regulatory policy is a big part of the problem. In fact, I hear from property owners consistently who tell me that regulatory over-reach and delays are the greatest detriment to economic development in Michigan.

While the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) manages wetlands in this state, we are one of only two states that manage federal wetlands policy with a state agency. We believe this is inappropriate and support HB 4153, to give this authority back to the Army Corps of Engineers.

Doing so, we believe will serve to improve the likelihood for more economic investment in Michigan, which will result in job growth and a stronger state economy. Make no mistake, we have our reservations with the Army Corps as well, but we believe that if there are issues regarding federal wetlands policy, they can best be addressed and modified at the federal level, and therefore it is most appropriate that a federal agency is dealing with wetlands oversight.

We support Governor Granholm's recommendation that the wetlands management in Michigan be returned to the Federal Army Corps of Engineers. We believe it will result in a more streamlined application process and improve the likelihood of a more stable and sustained recovery of Michigan's economy. In closing, I would ask two questions of those who might oppose this legislation: 1. If this proposal can't work, how is it that 48 other states are managing wetland issues at the federal level? 2. Why is it that businesses from outside Michigan who come here invariably say the DEQ process is more difficult, restrictive and cumbersome than the Federal management, but we seldom hear it the other way around?

Thank you.

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